United Nations E/ICEF/2004/11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 April 2004*

Original: English

For action

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2004
7-11 June 2004
Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

Progress report on the evaluation function in UNICEF

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to Executive Board decision 2002/9 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1), in which the Board endorsed the report presented to the Board at the annual session of 2002 (E/ICEF/2002/10) as the policy statement on the evaluation function in UNICEF. The Board also requested that a progress report be presented to the Board at the present session.

The present report provides an overview of the UNICEF evaluation system, of progress made in strengthening of the evaluation function and of the evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office. A draft decision for approval by the Executive Board is contained in paragraph 61.

I. Overview

A. Background

1. In decision 2002/9 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1), adopted at the annual session of 2002, the Executive Board endorsed the report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) (E/ICEF/2002/10) as the policy statement on the evaluation function of UNICEF. The Executive Board also requested that a progress report be presented at the present session.

* The submission of this document was delayed by internal consultations.
** E/ICEF/2004/8.

04-30290 (E) 120504

2. In decision 2002/9, the Executive Board reiterated, in the context of the evaluation function, the principles of universality and country-driven programming for the activities of UNICEF. The Board emphasized the importance of preserving the decentralized nature of the evaluation system in UNICEF, given the diversity of situations that exist in different countries, and recognized that it is necessary to take into consideration this diversity while drawing lessons at the global level for policy development from evaluation exercises. The Board encouraged UNICEF to collaborate with the other members of the United Nations system on questions relating to the evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of operational activities for development as identified in the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, as contained in General Assembly resolution 56/201 of 21 December 2001. The Executive Board welcomed the Executive Director's decision to publicize all evaluation reports.

3. The Board also requested:

(a) The UNICEF secretariat to ensure transparency and impartiality of evaluations and to make sure that the evaluation process is conducted in a professional manner, while also taking into account the views of all concerned actors;

(b) UNICEF to enhance the independence of evaluation by making more extensive use of external evaluators, from both programme and donor countries, particularly the country concerned;

(c) UNICEF to support programme countries to evaluate their own programmes and to contribute to the strengthening of evaluation capacity in these countries;

(d) UNICEF to ensure the full participation of the national authorities in the drafting of terms of reference, the development of evaluation methodologies and indicators, and the selection of evaluation teams in all evaluation exercises conducted at the country level;

(e) The UNICEF secretariat to take into account, where appropriate, the programme of work of the Executive Board when scheduling its evaluation activities;

(f) The UNICEF secretariat to ensure that evaluations of relevance to the Executive Board are brought to its attention.

4. All requests from the Executive Board have been implemented to the greatest extent possible. The transparency, impartiality and professionalism of evaluations were ensured not only through the use of external consultants, but also through the validation of findings and conclusions, and extensive consultations with all stakeholders. Evaluations used and strengthened countries' capacities to evaluate their own programmes, and involved national partners in all stages of evaluation management whenever possible. The outcomes of evaluations are incorporated in the present report. Since the evaluation plan is linked to the MTSP, which has a four-year duration, it was less obvious how it could be linked directly to the programme of work of the Executive Board, which is decided on an annual basis.

B. Evaluation in the context of the medium-term strategic plan

5. The MTSP combined a reinforced results-based management approach with a human right-based approach to programming. It established five organizational priorities, more clearly defined objectives and indicators, and strengthened the strategic use of the evaluation function. For the first time, a plan was proposed for the evaluation of the MTSP. The organizational priorities of the MTSP guided the selection of thematic evaluations undertaken at the global level. The country programme evaluation work that was started in 2002 responds to the MTSP requirement for a stronger focus on the country programme level and on strategic governance of the organization as a whole.

6. At the second regular session of 2004, a mid-term review of the implementation of the MTSP will be submitted to the Executive Board. The annual reports prepared by the Regional Directors on mid-term reviews of country programmes and major evaluations will also contribute to this review, as will findings from evaluations undertaken by UNICEF in the context of the MTSP.

C. Basic design of the evaluation system

7. The report on the evaluation function in the context of the MTSP (E/ICEF/2002/10) explained that the oversight spectrum entails five key functions: (a) management performance monitoring and reporting; (b) internal and external audit; (c) investigation; (d) evaluation; and (e) research. It is important to understand that the evaluation function is not an inspection, nor is it an audit. It should not be confused with (performance) monitoring, which is a function of self-assessment and reporting done by management. Finally, one should not expect evaluation to fulfil the role of academic research.

8. In UNICEF, evaluation is a function that examines a policy, a strategy, a programme or an activity or project by asking: "Are we doing the right thing?", "Are we doing it right?", and "Are there better ways of doing it?". It answers the first question by proceeding with a "reality check", by examining the rationale or justification, and by assessing relevance in relationship to the realization of rights. The second question is answered by examining effectiveness through the lenses of the relevance of results achieved, and by assessing efficiency with the intent of optimizing the use of resources. The third question is dealt with by identifying and comparing alternatives, by seeking best practices and by providing relevant lessons learned.

9. At present, there are no common detailed norms and standards that govern the evaluation function within the United Nations system, but evaluations follow norms and standards of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and of evaluation associations. In the context of the United Nations Evaluation Group, UNICEF is chairing the working group on norms and standards, which aims to reach consensus on harmonized norms and standards within the United Nations system.

10. The decentralized nature of the UNICEF evaluation system is unique, with evaluation managers and evaluators at headquarters and monitoring and evaluation officers in regional and country offices. Most evaluation systems within the United Nations are centralized at headquarters. Many are oriented towards policy-making

and management control, whereas in UNICEF the evaluation function is decentralized and oriented towards policy and programme guidance, and learning at all levels of the organization. At each management level, the main purpose of the evaluation function is to inform decision-making and distil lessons learned to be used for future planning. Most donor countries have highly centralized structures for the evaluation of their official development assistance. The multilateral development banks also have highly centralized, headquarter-based evaluation units. This reflects an "externally driven" mindset that often views programme countries as the object of evaluation, rather than genuine co-participants in joint assessment and learning. In compliance with decision 2002/9, the UNICEF "country demand-driven" approach facilitates the full participation of national authorities and other stakeholders, and provides an opportunity for strengthening evaluation capacities in these countries.

11. In UNICEF, country offices conduct most evaluation studies in collaboration with national partners. Regional offices provide oversight and support for evaluations undertaken by country offices and in particular, oversee the methodological rigour of the evaluation of country programmes. Regional offices also conduct thematic evaluations related to their regional strategies which involve multiple countries in the region. Headquarters divisions and offices undertake evaluations related to their areas of expertise. Finally, the Evaluation Office provides functional leadership and overall management of the evaluation system, and conducts independent evaluations. These levels mirror well the UNICEF accountability framework.

II. Progress report on evaluation strengthening

A. Overall situation of the evaluation function

12. During 2002-2003, 2,435 evaluative exercises were registered in the research and evaluation database. Of these, 576 (24 per cent) were evaluation reports and the rest were surveys or research studies. Sixty-three per cent of evaluation reports were related to the organizational priorities of the MTSP, and of those, 42 per cent dealt with child protection, 20 per cent with early childhood development (ECD), 19 per cent with HIV/AIDS, 11 per cent with immunization and 8 per cent with girls' education.

13. At present in UNICEF, there are 114 staff members responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities. There are 54 full-time incumbents of monitoring and evaluation positions. The others are monitoring and evaluation focal points who allocate a portion of their time to these duties. Of these 144 staff, 61 are national officers and 53 are international Professionals. Forty-six of the total number are women, and 48 per cent of them are at P-3 level and above. This is equivalent to the situation of the total positions filled by male staff members at these levels (47 per cent). A quick survey at the regional level has shown that monitoring and evaluation staff allocate about 20 per cent of their time to evaluation activities. For the remainder of the time, they perform duties related to situation analysis, household surveys, programme performance monitoring, reporting and such other activities as planning, quality assurance, networking and representation. In some offices, the monitoring and evaluation focal point is a planning or programme officer.

14. At present, the UNICEF Programme Manager System does not disaggregate commitments and expenditures related to situation analysis, monitoring, evaluation and research. Overall, expenditures in 2003 for monitoring and evaluation represented some 6 per cent of total regular resources and 1 per cent of total other resources. The UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedures Manual indicates that in support to results-based management, 2-5 per cent of the budget should be spent specifically on performance monitoring and evaluation. Activities covered by this description may include annual and mid-term reviews, programme and project evaluations, research, studies and survey or other data collection for performance monitoring. In addition, further resource allocations should be made to support monitoring of the situation of women and children, e.g., household surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys and *DevInfo*.

B. Findings from a meta-evaluation

15. In 2003, the Evaluation Office conducted a meta-evaluation of one half of the evaluation reports received at headquarters in 2001 and 2002. The objective of the meta-evaluation was to assess the quality of evaluations supported by UNICEF country offices, to see whether progress had been made since the last review in 1994, and to recommend how quality might be improved. The criteria used to assess evaluations were drawn from widely accepted standards of professional evaluation associations, other reviews of evaluation quality, UNICEF programme policy and the criteria used for the 1994 review. These criteria covered the stages of evaluation design, management, reporting and follow-up, and explored issues of utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.

16. In the last review in 1994, the reviewers concluded that regarding the overall quality of the reports, 3 per cent were inadequate, 29 per cent were poor, 28 per cent were fair, 25 per cent were good and 15 per cent excellent. The reviewers found that the most common reasons for inadequate reporting might have been the lack of communication between contracted personnel and UNICEF officers, the lack of foresight (i.e., no baseline data, insufficient allocation of time to research) or inadequate competence of the investigators in the field under study. While evaluations were generally stronger in terms of findings, the logical linkage to recommendations and the documentation of methodology were considered particularly weak. Lack of clarity of terms of reference, poor planning (time and budgetary allocation) and lack of expertise of evaluators were seen as some of the critical factors in the poor quality of evaluations.

17. Ten years later, the meta-evaluation found that UNICEF evaluations still are not consistent in quality. About one in five are excellent, but the worst one third are sufficiently poor to constitute a concern. The five criteria of quality on which UNICEF evaluations did best were: (a) the clear statement of evaluation objectives and questions to be answered; (b) the link between those objectives and the UNICEF mission and approach to programming, including protection of children's rights, promotion of their welfare and gender equality (though gender was the weakest of these); (c) the adequacy of qualitative and quantitative information gathered to answer the evaluation questions; (d) the link between evidence and analysis and the eventual recommendations; and (e) the overall clarity of reports. The five criteria of quality on which the UNICEF evaluations did worst were: (a) costs were not well described and were seldom compared with results; (b) the "outputs" of the

programme or project often were not adequately described or measured and with this missing link, the causal chain from activities to outcomes was broken; (c) evaluation ethics were seldom reviewed at the research and design stage and rarely addressed in the reports, including rare mention of how evaluators' objectivity and independence were ensured; (d) the replicability of the project, programme or initiative in other contexts was not often described; and (e) lessons learned were often not generalized beyond the immediate intervention being evaluated to indicate what wider relevance to UNICEF there might be.

18. In response to the meta-evaluation and subsequent further analysis with regional monitoring and evaluation officers, UNICEF will focus in the coming years on improving the quality in the bottom one third of evaluations and ensuring examples of excellence in evaluation design for priority thematic areas consistent with the MTSP. A number of practical measures will be undertaken to improve and achieve four key results: (a) better focus of evaluation resources on priority questions of decision makers; (b) better management of the evaluation process; (c) better evaluation design; and (d) better follow-up and dissemination of results.

19. To improve the quality of evaluations, UNICEF will have to improve its planning. Evaluation and its requirements have to be part of the planning process from the start, with clear identification of objectives and revealing performance indicators. This is an essential prerequisite for an objective evaluation of results achieved. In the light of limited resources, the systematic use of the integrated monitoring and evaluation plan (IMEP) will facilitate better planning of evaluations. In order to maximize the influence of UNICEF, it might be better to choose and focus evaluation efforts on producing a relatively smaller number of excellent evaluations in vital areas of intervention, with wide potential for replicability. Evaluation budgets should be adequate to allow a thorough evaluation design and sufficient time for both field work to obtain good data and for analysis and reflection.

20. In order to respond to the findings of the meta-evaluation and to address shortcomings in the quality of evaluations, a number of practical measures will be undertaken in the coming years. A special effort will be made to improve the design stage and the drafting of terms of reference, both crucial for a good evaluation. Methods for the measurement of project or programme outcomes will be improved. To that end, the results-based management and monitoring tools that have recently been produced by the Division of Policy and Planning (DPP), in collaboration with the Evaluation Office, are an important first step. Efforts will also be made to improve the overall management of evaluations. Finally, the Evaluation Office will improve the mechanisms that will ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations are used to their maximum potential, both within and between countries. The following sections of this report will address other measures taken by UNICEF to strengthen the quality of evaluations and evaluation capacities at national, regional and global levels.

C. Strengthening in-country evaluation capacities

21. UNICEF pursues several approaches to evaluation capacity-building. UNICEF support to evaluation capacity-building takes place primarily through associating national stakeholders in the evaluation process, holding training sessions and

promoting the development of evaluation associations. UNICEF does not have discreet projects or programmes aimed specifically at institutional strengthening in evaluation. This is a mandate assumed by the United Nations Development Programme and the multilateral development banks. UNICEF systematically provides ongoing support when a country office, together with the Government, closely plans, implements, monitors and follows up on cooperation activities. This also includes country programme evaluations that can strengthen mid-term reviews and strategy development. This is implemented in a genuine spirit of partnership and ownership.

22. Country programme evaluations comply with Executive Board decision 2002/9, which requested that UNICEF ensure the full participation of the national authorities in drafting the terms of reference, developing evaluation methodologies and indicators, and selecting evaluations teams in all evaluation exercises conducted at the country level. As part of the Monterrey Consensus (2002), as set out in the Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003) and as specified in the Joint Marrakech Memorandum on Managing for Development Results (2004), the international community is committed to increase developmental impact, enhance national ownership of the development process and reduce transactional costs.

23. In the professional evaluation community, there is an agreement that national evaluation associations are called to play a leading role in professional evaluation development, training and exchange. In a number of countries and together with other partners, UNICEF has supported the formation of national evaluation associations as a means to strengthen capacities in programme countries. National evaluation associations facilitate collaboration and exchange among evaluators from the governmental, institutional, academic, non-governmental and private sectors. In compliance with Executive Board decision 1994/24 (E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1), which requested that priority be given to support for sub-Saharan Africa, both the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the Western and Central Africa Regional Office have been actively involved, in the last biennium, in the strengthening of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA). ESARO has given secretarial support for the articulation of a professional code, the setting up of a roster of African evaluators and the hosting of biannual meetings of AfrEA. ESARO also supported the successful transition of the AfrEA secretariat from UNICEF to an African organization.

24. In 2003, the Brazil country office and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean were instrumental in the creation of the Brazilian Evaluation Network and the regional evaluation network, which brings together the national evaluation associations of Latin America. Other regional and country offices have also been associated with the activities of regional and national evaluation associations. In 2003, the Evaluation Office became an institutional member of the International Development Evaluation Association, which is dedicated to the development of evaluation methodology. The Office also provided support and a grant for the formation of the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, which includes the regional and national evaluation associations and will play a key role in setting professional standards and making evaluation training available via national evaluation associations.

D. Strengthening of UNICEF country offices

25. At the country programme level, the Evaluation Office has promoted the systematic use of the IMEP, which is the central tool that helps Governments and UNICEF country offices jointly to manage their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, as established in the country programme action plan. In response to Executive Board decision 2002/4 (E/ICEF/2002/8), the final version of country programme documents now include a summary results matrix, which enables the country office to clarify from the outset what results are to be achieved by the country programme.

26. The IMEP makes it easier to use information strategically during programme implementation. The five-year IMEP helps to: (a) formulate evaluation topics directly related to the achievement of strategic results; (b) determine activities for the establishment of baselines and for tracking progress; (c) identify research activities addressing critical knowledge gaps related to children, including those identified during the preparation of the causal analysis; (d) schedule the monitoring and evaluation workload; (e) synchronize data collection and dissemination with decision-making opportunities; and (f) identify needs and activities to strengthen partners' capacities in the areas of data collection, analysis and evaluation. The Evaluation Office, in collaboration with regional offices, is promoting the generalization of IMEP practices through the facilitation of regional training workshops and the dissemination of good practices. Regional offices have provided many training sessions on the IMEP at the national level. Guidelines on the IMEP have been further developed this year to bring an annual IMEP tool more fully into annual planning and management processes.

27. In each country office, a Professional staff member is designated as the focal point for evaluation matters. Regional monitoring and evaluation officers are in continuous contact with country office evaluation focal points. The Evaluation Office disseminates evaluation-related information via the network of focal points and holds intranet "e-conferences" with them. These focal points have the following responsibilities: (a) to assist in designing, updating, implementing and monitoring plans to promote and support evaluations; (b) to share evaluation results and disseminate lessons learned within the office and with partners for use in the programming process and project planning; and (c) to prepare proposals and coordinate the training of both government and UNICEF staff for improved monitoring and evaluation.

28. Policy and guidance are being adjusted to ensure systematic use of evaluation standards, evaluation criteria and peer-review mechanisms on the quality of evaluation design and the use of and standards for evaluation terms of reference. These are being incorporated in both the UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedures Manual and audit guidelines for country offices.

29. UNICEF is an active member of the United Nations Development Group task force on simplification and harmonization. The guidelines for United Nations country teams preparing a Common Country Assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2004, which were finalized in 2003, contain some basic elements for an UNDAF monitoring and evaluation plan and an evaluation of the UNDAF, to take place in the fourth year of the common programme cycle. These instruments will be further refined in 2004.

E. Strengthening of regional offices

30. At the regional level, the evaluation function focuses on strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacities of UNICEF officers and their government counterparts through: (a) coordination with the Evaluation Office at headquarters; (b) preparation of regional evaluation plans; (c) provision of technical assistance and oversight to support effective monitoring and evaluation of country-level projects and programmes; (d) support to country programme evaluations to ensure their quality and impartiality; and (e) preparation, provision and review of training plans. In accordance with their regional evaluation plans, regional offices undertake thematic evaluations. They also ensure the contribution of the respective regions to global evaluations led by the Evaluation Office.

31. The meta-evaluation highlighted the need for a more active role of regional offices in ensuring better quality of the evaluations conducted at field level. In order to develop country programme evaluations and to improve the quality of evaluations led by country offices, there is an urgent need to strengthen the limited capacity of regional offices in evaluation. Because of the numerous tasks they are expected to perform, regional monitoring and evaluation officers currently are able to devote only a minor portion of their time and attention to evaluation activities. Furthermore, during this biennium, monitoring and evaluation officers are pressed to give greater priority to data collection in response to the requirement of reporting on the situation of children by the end of 2005. Priority will also be given to the monitoring of strategic results at the end of the present MTSP period. Therefore, it will be a challenge for regional offices to take on more systematically this support to country offices, the oversight of country programme evaluations and the conduct of thematic regional evaluations.

32. In the MTSP, it was expected that by 2004, regional offices would assume more responsibility for ensuring more systematic evaluations of country programmes. However, recent feedback from regional offices clearly indicates that they are not ready to assume full oversight of country programme evaluations because: (a) the country programme evaluation methodological project only started in 2003 and the guide will not be available until 2005; (b) at present, regional monitoring and evaluation officers devote only 20 per cent of their time for evaluation (as explained in paragraph 31 above) and this situation will not change unless additional resources are made available for regional offices; (c) the pilot exercise has demonstrated that a proper country programme evaluation, conducted with full participation, implies a substantial investment of staff time and financial resources; and (d) it is too early to determine the added value of the country programme evaluations, how effective and efficient they are compared to other review processes, and the most strategic way to use them. This should be examined against the background of overall efforts to rationalize external support to national development around programme country priorities, systems and processes, and taking into account overall simplification and harmonization efforts under the CCA/UNDAF process.

F. Strengthening of the Evaluation Office

33. Since January 2002, the Evaluation Office has been an independent office (it was formerly part of DPP) and is thus better positioned to contribute at the strategic governance level. As a member of senior staff committees and working groups, the Director is able to make available evaluation findings and lessons learned. The work programme of the Evaluation Office focuses on the country programme level and on strategic governance of the organization as a whole.

34. The Evaluation Committee was created in 2003. Its mandate is to review evaluation reports that have relevance at the global governance level of UNICEF. The Committee reviewed the work programme of the Evaluation Office and its implementation, and advised the Executive Director on decision-making resulting from evaluation-related matters.

35. As of 2003, all headquarters divisions and offices are required to submit an annual report to the Executive Director using a specified format that includes a list of studies and evaluations conducted during the year. This enables easy identification and sharing of evaluations done at headquarters.

G. Fortifying management of the evaluation function

36. In collaboration with regional offices, the Evaluation Office has undertaken or initiated, since 2002, pilot country programmes evaluations with Cambodia, Mauritius, Morocco, the Pacific Island Countries and Peru. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF supports a United Nations joint strategic review based on the poverty reduction strategy paper. In March 2003, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID approved funding for three-year project to develop the methodology and guidance for the country programme evaluation. A desk review was done on the state of the art of country programme evaluations. The project involves the development of a comprehensive framework to guide country programme evaluations, including the establishment of basic principles and methodologies, support to a limited number of field tests and to staff skills development. Special attention is given to dimensions of programme excellence (i.e., human rights-based approach to programming and results-based management) as well as the role of the country programme evaluation in the UNDAF and wider national contexts.

37. In 2003, the Evaluation Office took several steps to facilitate easy access to its research and evaluation database. An internet portal was set up to facilitate online uploading of evaluation reports by country and regional offices. A tracing tool was incorporated in the internet portal, making it simpler for regional offices to monitor what reports have been submitted by country offices and which are still pending. The office revamped its website, making it more user-friendly. As a follow-up to the meta-evaluation of the quality of evaluations undertaken by country offices, the Office drafted quality standards for evaluation reports that can be used for the terms of reference for evaluations. The quality standards will be used to rate reports when they are entered in the evaluation database.

38. Another measure that will fortify the evaluation function is the approval of the competency profile for the different levels of evaluation positions, which will provide clearer technical criteria to select qualified candidates. The competency

profile will also be used to assess the training needs of present incumbents. The Evaluation Office is actively involved in the staffing of evaluation positions and provides a technical assessment of the candidates.

39. In 2003, the Evaluation Office set up a roster of evaluation experts who were competitively identified and pre-qualified to serve as evaluation "coaches" for monitoring and evaluation in chronic emergencies and unstable situations, where challenges for traditional training approaches are greatest. This pilot approach offers excellence in technical support for concrete activities by country offices and at the same time builds the skills and knowledge of UNICEF staff and partners. During the current biennium (2004-2005), the Evaluation Office intends to develop a series of long-term administrative arrangement to pre-qualify individuals and firms for evaluation work in the areas of high priority for UNICEF. This approach should result in significant time-saving in the contract award process.

40. The Evaluation Office has a collaborative relationship with the Office of Internal Audit. Work programmes are exchanged and taken into consideration. The two offices currently are collaborating on the development of a "real-time" evaluation methodology and mechanism for use in the early stages of the humanitarian response to rapid onset emergencies. Real-time evaluation is proposed as a rapid light assessment at the early stages of a humanitarian response, covering programme design and implementation, operational strategies and management systems. It covers the issues typically explored in evaluation and audit, but maintains a strong focus on immediate supportive feedback to the country office, regional office and headquarters. This initiative is funded by DfID in the context of the strengthening UNICEF capacities in the area of humanitarian action. The methodology, developed in close collaboration with the Office of Emergency Programmes and Programme Division, was first piloted in Liberia in March 2004. After at least one more pilot test, the end of 2004 should see the establishment of a systematic evaluation mechanism for all major humanitarian crises.

41. Evaluation training modules are being prepared for posting on the UNICEF Intranet as a self-tutorial programme and as methodological support tool accessible in all the countries. The modules are presently being translated into French and Spanish. In addition, a training of trainers session in evaluation in the context of emergency and unstable conditions was conducted in 2003.

III. Evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office

42. This chapter provides an overview of evaluation studies involving the Evaluation Office. These studies are accessible on the UNICEF evaluation website (http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index.html). During the biennium 2002-2003, the Evaluation Office had four international Professional and three General Staff service staff members, and a consultant budget of approximately $300,000 per year, with an additional $115,000 in 2003 from DfID for the country programme evaluation project.

43. This chapter does not include the evaluation work performed by regional and country offices. The Regional Directors will report to the Executive Board on their regions' mid-term reviews and major evaluations at the second session of 2004.

A. Evaluations related to organizational priorities

44. The table below shows the thematic evaluation activities identified for the MTSP period, which were discussed in the previous report to the Executive Board on the evaluation function (E/ICEF/2002/10).

Table 1
Thematic evaluation activities for the period of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan, 2002-2005

Date	*Organizational priority*	*Evaluation*
2002-2003	HIV/AIDS	Lessons learned from the evaluation of UNAIDS
		Methodology for assessing behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Girls' education	African Girls' Education Initiative
	Immunization "plus"	Evaluation of selected programmes
	Integrated ECD	Methodology for country case studies
		Baseline for the case studies
2004-2005	Integrated ECD	Evaluation of ECD case studies
		Evaluation of Integrated Management of Childhood Illness case studies
	HIV/AIDS	Evaluation of behavioural and institutional outcomes
	Child protection	Education as prevention against child labour
		Desk review of project review and lessons learned
		Evaluation of mainstreaming in country programmes

45. During the biennium 2002-2003, the Evaluation Office conducted evaluation work related to HIV/AIDS, girls' education and child protection. Because of its limited resource base and inability to successfully attract other resources funding, the Office did not launch evaluation studies related to immunization "plus" and ECD. Evaluation studies on immunization "plus" are scheduled for 2005. The Evaluation Office will not undertake evaluation studies on ECD in the 2004-2005 biennium. However, Programme Division is undertaking a detailed review of this priority, in the context of the mid-term review of the MTSP and preparation of the next MTSP. In addition, ECD is a frequent theme of evaluations conducted by country offices and their findings will be used for the review.

46. The first evaluation study related to HIV/AIDS began in 2001 and was completed in 2002. The report, entitled *An Evaluation of the UNICEF Policy Response to HIV/AIDS in the Nineties: The Use of Carrots, Sticks and Sermons*, was the first attempt by the Evaluation Office to examine the existence of policy statements. The lessons learned are the following. First, the UNICEF approach of having field experience play a major role in policy formulation needs to be preserved. This guarantees that policies are relevant and can be implemented, that people's experiences are used and that the organization learns. Second, everyone

would be well served by a single policy statement on HIV/AIDS. Third, a policy document should be precise in its categories of analysis and action, and must not be contradictory. It is necessary to pay a great deal of attention to the dimensions of policy, and to subject it to a real test of how it is understood and what is included and what is excluded. Fourth, the process of policy formulation should include a screening of other relevant UNICEF policies, and should make connections to these. Fifth, a policy statement needs to be revised, and there should be a mechanism to update it visibly, explicitly and regularly. In sum, the lessons learned point to the need to make the "process" of policy formulation more transparent and better coordinated. Another lesson is that the rhetoric of policy must receive more attention, to make sure that policy statements are clear and precise. In 2003, UNICEF published *Fighting HIV/AIDS: Strategies for success 2002-2005*, which goes a long way in providing a single statement on the UNICEF approach.

47. The second study was an externally led evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). It was an occasion for UNICEF to contribute actively to the evaluative process and reassess its own role as a co-sponsor. Drawing on the strengths of its co-sponsors, UNAIDS provides overall leadership for the United Nations response to HIV/AIDS. UNICEF plays multiple roles vis-à-vis UNAIDS, including those of co-sponsor, non-voting member of the Programme Coordination Board, recipient of funds from the unified budget and work plan, leader in collecting and analyzing data for indicators, and participant in United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS in many countries. The Evaluation Office played a proactive role during the course of the evaluation. The UNICEF response to the report was endorsed and largely used by the UNAIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group for the preparation of its own technical comments on the report. Evaluating UNAIDS was not an easy task, given its multiple roles and stakeholders. Conceptualized as a United Nations-led vehicle for coordinating the response of the United Nations funds, programme and specialized agencies, UNAIDS represents a structure for managing change within a large global bureaucracy. The tone of much of the evaluation and the response to it indicate that work on this internal task, while advancing, remains both unfinished and central to the role of UNAIDS.

48. With funding from the UNAIDS Evaluation Office, a methodology was prepared for assessing behavioural and institutional outcomes of programmes and projects. At the end of 2003, the Evaluation Offices of UNAIDS and UNICEF reviewed the methodological proposal, *Social Capital and HIV/AIDS*. Both offices decided that it is not feasible to implement the proposal, because it would be too costly in terms of staff time and financial resources required to collect the time series data in multiple countries. It was concluded that this type of study belongs more to a research institute and is not suitable for an evaluation office.

49. Finally, in 2002, in the context of the preparation of the annual report of the Executive Director, the Evaluation Office collaborated with Programme Division to prepare an evaluation of the implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes during the first year of the MTSP cycle. The report showed that UNICEF is structuring its logical model to programming, deploying efforts to establish performance indicators at the strategic level, and aligning the various units of UNICEF. The efforts deployed broke new ground and could be useful for the other organizational priorities.

50. The evaluation of the African Girls Education Initiative (AGEI) has almost been completed. Preliminary findings were presented at a workshop in 2003 as part of preparations for the United Nations Girls Education Initiative, and the report will be available in May 2004. The AGEI evaluation follows a synthesis from evaluations prepared in 2002. A report on lessons and implications of girls' education activities examines the role of national policies, traditional schools, families, communities, priorities, strategies and mechanisms of intervention. It concludes that there has been evident progress in girls' education, especially in enhancing their access, retention and success. In 2002, a review was also conducted of evaluations of UNICEF education activities between 1994 and 2000. The review looked at the characteristics and dynamic evolution of education work in UNICEF, discussed lessons and findings on UNICEF-supported activities in education and provided feedback on the quality of UNICEF-supported evaluations in education.

51. UNICEF participated actively in the management group of a multipartite evaluation of external support to basic education. The evaluation was commissioned by 13 donor countries and development organizations, along with representatives of four partner countries. An extensive desk review was made and four country case studies analyzed. The report is entitled *Local Solutions to Global Challenges: Toward Effective Partnership in Basic Education – Joint Evaluation of External Support to Basic Education in Developing Countries*. The overriding conclusion of the evaluation deals with the ongoing search for meaningful partnerships as a road to the effective provision and use of external support to basic education, and hence to improvements in basic education in partner countries. Over the period 1990 to 2002, the commitment to partnership was evident in the efforts of both external agencies and national and local partners. External support has contributed to expanding access to basic education. What is most lacking, however, is a willingness and determination to improve basic education through locally developed solutions, which are most relevant to the particular context of partner countries, and are built from the ground up, rather than through the application of blueprints and templates developed at the global level.

52. In 2003, the Evaluation Office completed an evaluation related to child protection, *Education as a Preventive Strategy Against Child Labour: Evaluation of the Cornerstone Programme of UNICEF's Global Child Labour Programme*. The aim of the programme was to use quality education as the principal "magnet" to attract children and their parents away from child labour to education. This evaluation exposed programmatic and organizational achievements and challenges at all levels of the global thematic programme. It conveyed lessons learned and provided ways to move forward. The evaluation found UNICEF-supported country programmes to be a valuable framework for effective action against all forms of child labour, and that the programme process offers an excellent platform for a rights-based and results-oriented programme development. Its joint ownership with government and strong longstanding links with non-governmental organizations and civil society allow the country programme to be a catalyst. The programmes have a high degree of decentralization, as they link directly with children, families, communities and local government, often in remote and marginalized areas. Regional offices have played a useful, albeit limited, role in capacity-building, information sharing, communication and advocacy. Experiences in East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia are particularly inspiring, as they succeeded in creating self-sustained networks and task forces.

B. Evaluations related to organizational performance

53. Table 2 below shows the evaluation topics for the MTSP period that were announced in 2002.

Table 2
Evaluation topics for the medium-term strategic plan period, 2002-2005

Type of evaluation	*Date*	*Subject*
Corporate functions	2002	Strategic information management systems
	2003	Supply function
	2004	Personnel function
	2005	Resource mobilization and management
Topical evaluations	2002-2003	Humanitarian assistance
		Emergency capacity-building
	2004-2005	Gender and discrimination
		Advocacy
		Monitoring and evaluation capacity strengthening

54. During the biennium 2002-2003, because of the financial support received from DfID, priority was given to topical evaluations related to humanitarian assistance and emergency capacity-building. The planned evaluations of the supply and personnel functions had to be postponed because of insufficient resources. With its regular resources, the Evaluation Office commissioned the meta-evaluation discussed above, which assessed the need for strengthening evaluation capacities. The Office also prepared a review of how UNICEF generates and learns lessons from evaluative activities.

55. In collaboration with DPP and the Information Technology Division, the Evaluation Office evaluated *ChildInfo*, a strategic information system for the management of country databases on the situation of children and on the achievement of key development goals at the country level. The consolidated *ChildInfo* assessment report contains a survey on the use of *ChildInfo* in some 80 countries, an institutional assessment of Community System Foundation (CSF) (the partner with which UNICEF developed *ChildInfo*), an examination of the contractual relations and a technical assessment of the software used. The assessment concluded that *ChildInfo* can play a major facilitating role in building an effective monitoring infrastructure in UNICEF and the United Nations. *ChildInfo* is performing well in its present context, but its wider deployment in the near future will require changes in the technological package. CSF, the partner institution, has provided good support in the development and use of *ChildInfo*, and has shown considerable commitment in helping UNICEF implement it at country level. However, the capacity of CSF to support wide use of *ChildInfo* needs to be assessed and contractual arrangements need to be revised to support a systematic expansion of services. Based on this positive assessment, the Executive Director offered to the United Nations the support of UNICEF in the use of *ChildInfo*, now known as

DevInfo, for tracking progress against the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments.

56. In 2003, the Director of the Evaluation Office led a peer review of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman that assessed the Office's performance one year after its creation. The peer review also enabled a sharing of experience among ombudsmen and provided advice for the strategic positioning of the Office within the United Nations system.

57. The Evaluation Office commissioned a desk review of experiences of real-time evaluation to identify the lessons drawn from the experience of seven humanitarian agencies. The desk review highlighted many critical concerns for the methodology, including the emphasis on participatory approaches involving the country office team, the need for balance between objective assessment and immediate practical support to resolve problems identified, and the need for immediate debriefing from the field level back to headquarters. The desk review also pointed to key lessons on setting up a mechanism for real-time evaluation: the need to ensure a systematic process for deciding when to conduct a real-time evaluation while balancing the involvement of country offices in terms of reference; the emphasis on trusted facilitator-evaluators with field credibility; and factors in preparation and feedback processes. The desk review helped to shape pilot exercises and initial planning for the overall mechanism.

58. The Evaluation Office conducted two evaluations of UNICEF emergency capacity-building. The first report, on capacity-building for UNICEF humanitarian response, examined the situation as of 2001. The second report, a review of the UNICEF humanitarian response capacity, looks at the situation in more depth. The study showed that there is a better understanding and acceptance of humanitarian crisis needs among UNICEF staff, in line with the Core Corporate Commitments for UNICEF emergency response. Almost one half of country offices are engaging, to some degree, in advocacy on difficult issues. Emergency preparedness and response planning exercises have been conducted at all levels of the organization and mainstreaming of the preparedness planning has been advanced, both in terms of policy and in actual practice.

59. The study further noted that training packages have been developed on humanitarian principles and the human rights-based approach to programming, and on emergency preparedness and response. A significant cadre of staff are now trained as trainers in both packages. A clear UNICEF security policy has been issued and the Operations Centre is providing a range of services to the field, including information exchange and monitoring of security situations. In the area of human resources, "surge capacity" through both internal and external rosters has been advanced at both regional and global levels, and peer counselling and stress counselling services for staff are being provided by regional offices. UNICEF is also active in inter-agency collaboration and coordination. Despite these changes, the study stressed that constraints remain. Clarity is needed on the implication of the Core Corporate Commitments, particularly if UNICEF proposes to refine or expand them. The organization needs to strengthen its early warning system, including political and vulnerability analysis, and rapid assessment. In addition, more guidance on monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response programmes is required in many of the newer programming areas.

60. Together with the evaluation units of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Evaluation Office conducted a review of the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health (CCH). The report recommended that in the light of alternative collaborative arrangements that had been developed since its establishment in 1997, and the balance of costs and achievements, the CCH should be discontinued. At the first regular session of 2004, the Executive Board endorsed that recommendation (decision 2004/1 E/ICEF/2004/7 (Part I). The Executive Boards of UNFPA and WHO adopted similar decisions and the CCH was discontinued.

IV. Draft recommendation

61. The Executive Director *recommends* that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

Takes note of the progress report on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2004/11).